

**2SHB 2867** - S COMM AMD

By Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education

Strike everything after the enacting clause and insert the following:

**"Sec. 1.** RCW 43.215.005 and 2007 c 415 s 1 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The legislature recognizes that:

(a) Parents are their children's first and most important teachers and decision makers;

(b) Research across disciplines now demonstrates that what happens in the earliest years makes a critical difference in children's readiness to succeed in school and life;

(c) Washington's competitiveness in the global economy requires a world-class education system that starts early and supports life-long learning;

(d) Washington state currently makes substantial investments in voluntary child care and early learning services and supports, but because services are fragmented across multiple state agencies, and early learning providers lack the supports and incentives needed to improve the quality of services they provide, many parents have difficulty accessing high quality early learning services;

(e) A more cohesive and integrated voluntary early learning system would result in greater efficiencies for the state, increased partnership between the state and the private sector, improved access to high quality early learning services, and better employment and early learning outcomes for families and all children.

(2) The legislature finds that:

(a) The early years of a child's life are critical to the child's healthy brain development and that the quality of caregiving during the early years can significantly impact the child's intellectual, social, and emotional development;

1       (b) A successful outcome for every child obtaining a K-12 education  
2 depends on children being prepared from birth for academic and social  
3 success in school. For children at risk of school failure, the  
4 achievement gap often emerges as early as eighteen months of age;

5       (c) There currently is a shortage of high quality services and  
6 supports for children ages birth to three and their parents and  
7 caregivers; and

8       (d) Increasing the availability of high quality services for  
9 children ages birth to three and their parents and caregivers will  
10 result in improved school and life outcomes.

11       (3) Therefore, the legislature intends to establish a robust birth-  
12 to-three continuum of services for parents and caregivers of young  
13 children in order to provide education and support regarding the  
14 importance of early childhood development.

15       ~~((+3+))~~ (4) The purpose of this chapter is:

16       (a) To establish the department of early learning;

17       (b) To coordinate and consolidate state activities relating to  
18 child care and early learning programs;

19       (c) To safeguard and promote the health, safety, and well-being of  
20 children receiving child care and early learning assistance, which is  
21 paramount over the right of any person to provide care;

22       (d) To provide tools to promote the hiring of suitable providers of  
23 child care by:

24       (i) Providing parents with access to information regarding child  
25 care providers;

26       (ii) Providing parents with child care licensing action histories  
27 regarding child care providers; and

28       (iii) Requiring background checks of applicants for employment in  
29 any child care facility licensed or regulated under current law;

30       (e) To promote linkages and alignment between early learning  
31 programs and elementary schools and support the transition of children  
32 and families from prekindergarten environments to kindergarten;

33       (f) To promote the development of a sufficient number and variety  
34 of adequate child care and early learning facilities, both public and  
35 private; and

36       (g) To license agencies and to assure the users of such agencies,  
37 their parents, the community at large and the agencies themselves that

adequate minimum standards are maintained by all child care and early learning facilities.

~~((4))~~ (5) This chapter does not expand the state's authority to license or regulate activities or programs beyond those licensed or regulated under existing law.

**Sec. 2.** RCW 43.215.020 and 2007 c 394 s 5 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The department of early learning is created as an executive branch agency. The department is vested with all powers and duties transferred to it under this chapter and such other powers and duties as may be authorized by law.

(2) The primary duties of the department are to implement state early learning policy and to coordinate, consolidate, and integrate child care and early learning programs in order to administer programs and funding as efficiently as possible. The department's duties include, but are not limited to, the following:

(a) To support both public and private sectors toward a comprehensive and collaborative system of early learning that serves parents, children, and providers and to encourage best practices in child care and early learning programs;

(b) To make early learning resources available to parents and caregivers;

(c) To carry out activities, including providing clear and easily accessible information about quality and improving the quality of early learning opportunities for young children, in cooperation with the nongovernmental private-public partnership;

(d) To administer child care and early learning programs;

(e) To standardize internal financial audits, oversight visits, performance benchmarks, and licensing criteria, so that programs can function in an integrated fashion;

(f) To support the implementation of the nongovernmental private-public partnership and cooperate with that partnership in pursuing its goals including providing data and support necessary for the successful work of the partnership;

(g) To work cooperatively and in coordination with the early learning council;

1 (h) To collaborate with the K-12 school system at the state and  
2 local levels to ensure appropriate connections and smooth transitions  
3 between early learning and K-12 programs; ((and))

4 (i) To develop a comprehensive birth-to-three plan to provide  
5 education and support through a continuum of options including, but not  
6 limited to, services such as: Home visiting; quality incentives for  
7 infant and toddler child care subsidies; quality improvements for  
8 family home and center-based child care programs serving infants and  
9 toddlers; professional development; early literacy programs; and  
10 informal supports for family, friend, and neighbor caregivers;

11 (j) Upon the development of an early learning information system,  
12 to make available to parents timely inspection and licensing action  
13 information through the internet and other means.

14 (3) The department's programs shall be designed in a way that  
15 respects and preserves the ability of parents and legal guardians to  
16 direct the education, development, and upbringing of their children,  
17 and that recognizes and honors cultural and linguistic diversity. The  
18 department shall include parents and legal guardians in the development  
19 of policies and program decisions affecting their children.

20 NEW SECTION. Sec. 3. The department of early learning, in  
21 collaboration with the early learning nongovernmental private-public  
22 partnership and the early learning advisory council, shall develop a  
23 birth-to-three plan, including recommended appropriation levels, and  
24 report to the appropriate committees of the legislature and the  
25 governor by December 1, 2010. The plan and recommendations required  
26 under this section shall be developed within existing resources."

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27 On page 1, line 1 of the title, after "learning;" strike the  
28 remainder of the title and insert "amending RCW 43.215.005 and  
29 43.215.020; and creating a new section."

EFFECT: Removes the following language: "As funding for the expansion of the prekindergarten program for three and four-year olds under this chapter is appropriated by the legislature, the legislature also intends to appropriate a proportional amount of funding to the department for implementation of the birth-to-three plan."

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